



News Release

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Corps releases draft plan to help endangered species

OMAHA – The Army Corps of Engineers has released its draft plan for implementing the provisions of the biological opinion on the Missouri River issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Nov. 30.

The plan presents a concept of how the Corps intends to implement the reasonable and prudent alternative presented in the opinion. It is available at www.nwd.usace.army.mil. Copies are also available by writing to: Project Manager, Missouri River Biological Opinion Implementation Plan, Omaha District, 215 N. 17th Street, Omaha, NE 68102.

The public comment period on the plan will continue through Feb. 16, 2001. Comments can be made at the web address above or in writing to the mailing address. The final implementation plan will be provided to the Service in early March.

The flow component of the proposed implementation plan to be provided to the Service in March will be used as the basis for the Master Manual preferred alternative in the revised draft environmental impact statement. It is scheduled for publication in late May 2001.

The Missouri River Basin Association will continue working to refine recommendations that will both preclude jeopardy to the listed species and maintain the existing uses of the river.

In the meantime, the Corps has initiated government-to-government consultation with Native American tribes as part of its trust responsibilities to the tribes. In addition, the Corps intends to work with the wide variety of other stakeholders who have interest in the management of the river.

The biological opinion evaluated the impact on listed species by the current operation of the main stem Missouri River dams and reservoirs, the bank stabilization and navigation channel project from Sioux City, Iowa, to the mouth, and the operation of the Kansas River dams managed by the Corps.

The Service determined that the current operations jeopardize the continued existence of the endangered pallid sturgeon and least tern and the threatened piping plover. It developed a reasonable and prudent alternative that would help lead to their recovery.

There are five major elements in the Service's alternative: adaptive management, habitat restoration, monitoring, pallid sturgeon propagation support, and flow modifications. The latter deals with flows from Fort Peck and Gavins Point Dams and intra-system unbalancing of storage levels in the three biggest reservoirs; Fort Peck, Mont., Lake Sakakawea, N.D., and Lake Oahe, S.D.